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(54) **METHOD AND CIRCUITRY FOR TRANSMITTING DATA**

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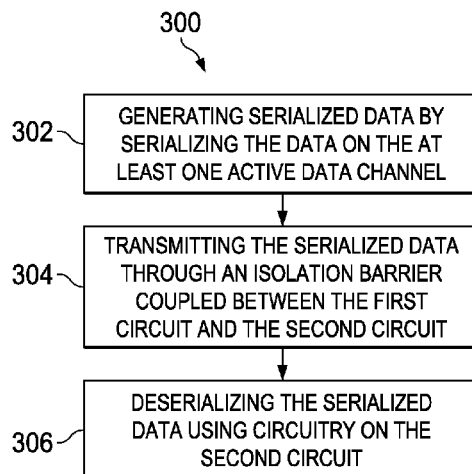
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(57) **ABSTRACT**

Data transfer devices and methods for transferring data between first and second circuits are disclosed. A data transfer device includes a first circuit having a plurality of data channels, wherein at least one of the data channels is an active data channel. A serializer has a plurality of inputs and an output, wherein the inputs are coupled to the plurality of data channels. The serializer is for coupling only one active channel at a time to the output. An isolation barrier is coupled to the output of the serializer, the isolation attenuates transients and passes the fundamental frequency. A second circuit includes a deserializer having an input and at least one output, the input is coupled to the isolation barrier, the at least one output is at least one active data channel.

21 Claims, 2 Drawing Sheets



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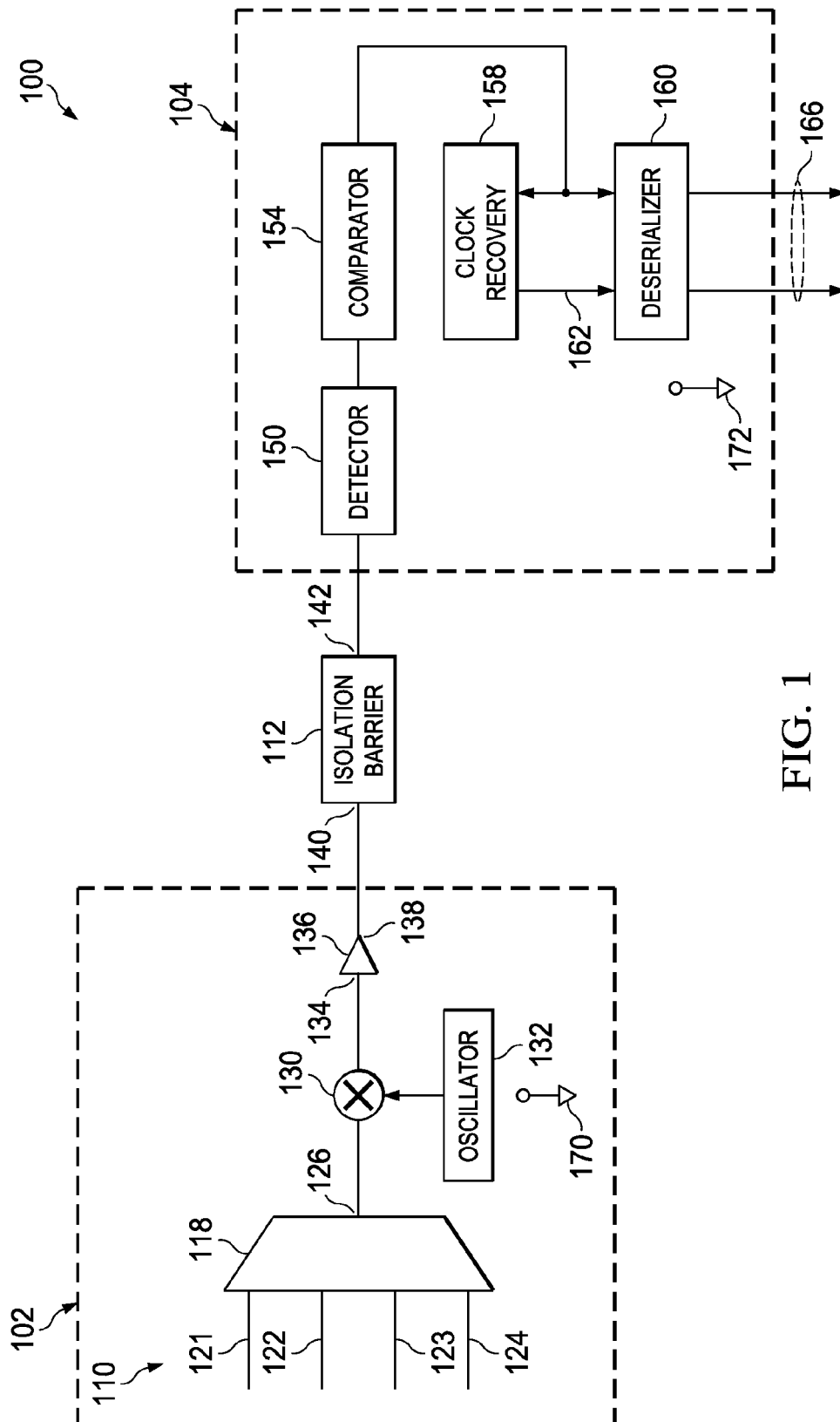


FIG. 1

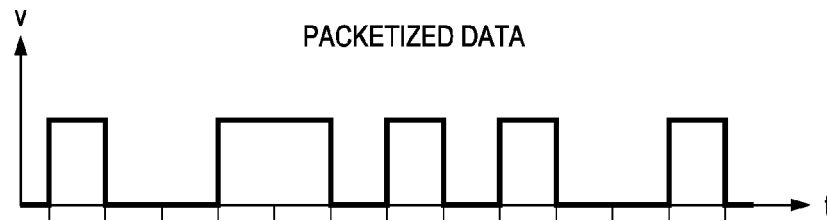


FIG. 2A

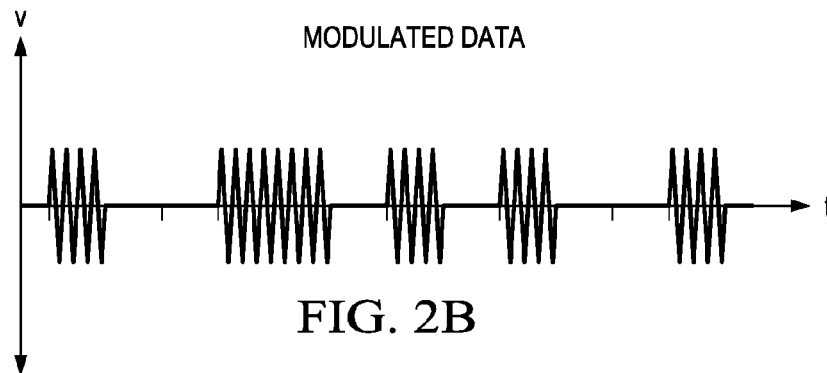


FIG. 2B

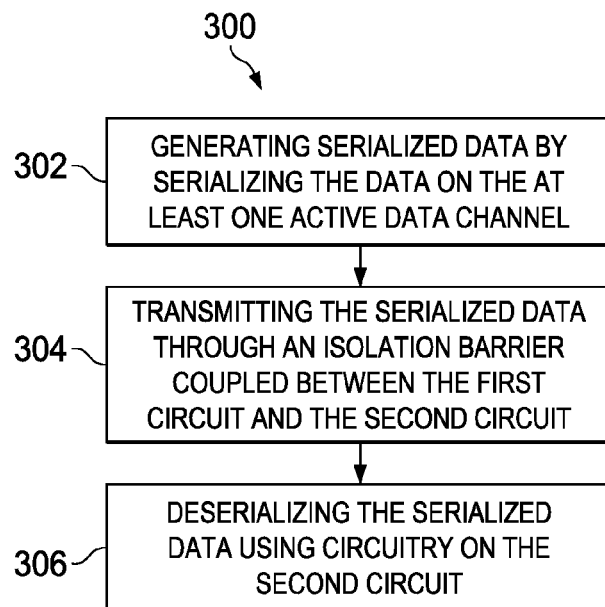


FIG. 3

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METHOD AND CIRCUITRY FOR TRANSMITTING DATA

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATION

This application claims priority to U.S. Provisional Patent Application Ser. No. 61/875,320, filed Sep. 9, 2013, entitled HIGH SPEED ISOLATED MUX-SERDES, naming Mark Morgan, et al. as inventors, which is hereby fully incorporated herein by reference for all purposes.

BACKGROUND

Some data transmissions are required to go between isolated circuits. For examples, sensors on some circuits operate at high voltage while processors that process data generated by the sensors operate at low voltage. Transients generated on the circuits have a probability of interrupting or corrupting data transmitted between the circuits. In order to overcome the data transmission problems caused by transients, isolation barriers are coupled between the circuits. In some embodiments, the isolation barriers are capacitors that attenuate the frequencies associated with the transients.

One of the problems with transmitting data between high and low voltage circuits is that isolation barriers are required for all of the data channels. When a plurality of channels is required, the same number of expensive isolation barriers is also required. In addition to the expense, the isolation barriers are typically large, which requires a large area on a circuit.

SUMMARY

Data transfer devices and methods for transferring data between first and second circuits are disclosed. A data transfer device includes a first circuit having a plurality of data channels, wherein at least one of the data channels is an active data channel. A serializer has a plurality of inputs and an output, wherein the inputs are coupled to the plurality of data channels. The serializer is for coupling only one active channel at a time to the output. An isolation barrier is coupled to the output of the serializer, the isolation attenuates transients and passes the fundamental frequency associated with the data transfer. A second circuit includes a deserializer having an input and at least one output, the input is coupled to the isolation barrier, the at least one output is at least one active data channel.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 is a block diagram of an embodiment of a system for transmitting data between two circuits.

FIG. 2A is an exemplary timing diagram showing an embodiment of a data signal generated by the serializer of FIG. 1.

FIG. 2B is an exemplary embodiment of the data signal of FIG. 2A after being modulated by the modulator of FIG. 1.

FIG. 3 is a flow chart describing an exemplary embodiment of the operation of the system of FIG. 1.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

FIG. 1 is a block diagram of a system 100 for transmitting data between two circuits that are referred to individually as a first circuit 102 and a second circuit 104. In the embodiment of FIG. 1, the first circuit 102 is referred to as a low voltage circuit and the second circuit is referred to as a high voltage

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circuit. The first circuit 102, being a low voltage circuit, includes devices that process data and typically operate at low voltages. In some embodiments, the first circuit 102 operates at voltages of approximately 3.3 volts or 5.0 volts. The second circuit 104 typically operates at voltages that are much higher than the voltages in the first circuit 102. In some embodiments, the second circuit 104 is associated with motor controllers that operate at several hundred volts. The voltages of the first and second circuits 102 and 104 described above are exemplary and the first and second circuits 102 and 104 may operate at virtually any voltages.

The system 100 enables data from a plurality of data channels 110 on the first circuit 102 to be transmitted to the second circuit 104. The system 100 serializes the data on the data channels 110 that are active (referred to as active channels), which may not be all the data channels 110. The serialized data is transmitted to the second circuit 104 by way of a barrier 112. The serialized data is then deserialized by the second circuit 104. By only transmitting data on active channels to the second circuit 104, the bandwidth of the transmission is increased and the latency is decreased relative to conventional data transmission techniques.

The first circuit 102 includes a serializer 118 that is coupled to the data channels 110. In some embodiments, the serializer 118 is a multiplexer or includes a multiplexor. In the embodiment of FIG. 1, there are four data channels 110 that are referred to individually as the first data channel 121, the second data channel 122, the third data channel 123, and the fourth data channel 124. In the embodiment of FIG. 1, not all of the data channels 110 are active, meaning that not all of the data channels 110 are configured to transmit data. For example, in some embodiments, the serializer 118 is configured to couple to all of the data channels 110, however, the second circuit 104 uses less than all of the data channels 110. For exemplary purposes, the first and second data channels 121 and 122 are considered to be active data channels meaning that they are configured to transmit data. The third and fourth data channels 123 and 124 are not configured to transmit data and are sometimes referred to as being inactive.

The serializer 118 is configured to couple the data channels 110 to an output 126 one data channel at a time. In the embodiment of FIG. 1, the serializer 118 is configured to only couple the active data channels 121 and 122 to the output 126. Accordingly, circuit resources are not wasted in coupling the inactive data channels 123 and 124 to the output 126. As described in greater detail below, by only coupling the active data channels 121 and 122 to the output 126, the circuit 100 does not waste bandwidth by trying to transmit when the third and fourth data channels 123 and 124 would otherwise be connected to the output 126. In addition, there is no time spent in serializing data on the inactive channels 123 and 124, so latency of the data transfer is improved. In some embodiments, a user or a manufacturer of the circuit 100 programs the serializer 118 to recognize only the active data channels 121 and 122.

The output 126 of the serializer 118 is coupled to a mixer 130 that modulates the data on the channel that is being output by the serializer 118. The mixer 130 receives a mixing signal from an oscillator 132. The frequency of the mixing signal generated by the oscillator 132 is referred to as the fundamental frequency. In some embodiments, the fundamental frequency is 16 GHz. In some embodiments, the mixed signal is referred to as being packetized, meaning that a data packet has been modulated. The data packet can include data received from the active channels 121 and 122, which is stored and transmitted to the mixer 130 after a predetermined period or after the cumulated data has reached a predetermined amount.

In some embodiments, the mixed signal is referred to as being a data burst. In the embodiment of FIG. 1, the packetized signal is transmitted to the input **134** of an amplifier **136**. The amplified packetized signal is output from the amplifier **136** at an output **138**.

The output **138** of the amplifier **136** is coupled to the isolation barrier **112**. The isolation barrier has a first node **140** and a second node **142**, wherein the packetized signal is input to the isolation barrier **112** at the first node **140** and is output at the second node **142**. The isolation barrier **112** attenuates or blocks transients from passing between the first circuit **102** and the second circuit **104**. In some embodiments the isolation barrier **112** is a capacitor that attenuates frequencies associated with transients or at least one transient. In the embodiments where the isolation barrier **112** is a capacitor or has a capacitance, the isolation barrier functions as a high pass filter. Accordingly, the fundamental frequency generated by the oscillator **132** should be high enough to be in the pass band of the isolation barrier **112**. In other embodiments, the isolation barrier **112** functions as a band pass filter, so the fundamental frequency is in the pass band of the filter. In the embodiments described above, the frequencies associated with transients or at least one transient are below or above the fundamental frequency so that the transients are attenuated without attenuating the packetized data.

The second node **142** of the isolation barrier **112** is coupled to the second circuit **104**. The second circuit **104** deserializes the packetized data generated by the first circuit **102**. In the embodiment of FIG. 1, the second node **142** is coupled to a detector **150** that detects the packetized signal. In some embodiments, the detector **150** is an envelope detector that filters or attenuates the fundamental frequency and leaves the original data as received on the active data channels. The detector **150** is coupled to a comparator **154** that detects the presence of a data signal. For example, the envelope detector **150** filters out the fundamental frequency, which leaves a data signal or pulse. The comparator **154** determines if the pulse or data signal is in fact a data signal. In some embodiments, the comparator **154** compares the signal to a predetermined voltage. If the amplitude of the data signal is greater than the predetermined voltage, the comparator **154** passes the signal or generates a new signal having a predetermined voltage level. If the amplitude of the signal is less than the predetermined voltage, the comparator does not pass any signal. This situation can be caused by noise or other anomalies picked up by the second circuit **104** wherein the noise or anomalies have amplitudes lower than the predetermined voltage.

The output of the comparator **154** is representative of the data signal that was coupled between an active data channel and the output **126** of the serializer **118**. The output signal of the comparator **154** is coupled to two devices, a clock recovery device **158** and a deserializer **160**. The clock recovery device **158** recovers or reconstructs the clock signal based on the output signal of the comparator **154**. The clock signal is the timing signal used in the generation of the data on the data channels **110**. In order to minimize the number of signals passing between the first circuit **102** and the second circuit **104** the clock signal is reconstructed rather than separately sent between the two circuits **102** and **104**. If the clock signal was sent between the circuits **102** and **104**, another isolation barrier would be required, which is expensive and requires area on the system **100**. The clock recovery device **158** detects an edge in the signal from the comparator **154** and commences to reconstruct the clock signal upon the detection.

The reconstructed clock signal is output on a line **162** to the deserializer **160**. The reconstructed clock signal is used by the deserializer **160** to reconstruct the data from the comparator

154. For example, the reconstructed clock signal is used by the deserializer to determine when a signal should be sampled. Accordingly, the deserializer **160** is able to function as a conventional deserializer using a conventional clock signal. The deserializer **160** outputs data on the output data channels **166**. It is noted that there are only two output data channels **166** because there are only two active data channels **121** and **122** on the data channels **110**. There is no data transmitted on the inactive data channels **123** and **124**, so there is no need to output data representative of the inactive data channels **123** and **124**.

The components and devices on the first circuit **102** operate relative to a first ground **170** and the components and devices on the second circuit **104** operate relative to a second ground **172**. The first and second grounds **170** and **172** are isolated from each other and in some embodiments, the second ground **172** electrically floats. Based on the separate grounds **170** and **172**, the signals on the first circuit **102** are referenced to the first ground **170** and the signals on the second circuit **104** are referenced to the second ground **172**. Some of the above described transients are the result of one of the grounds **170**, **172** encountering a voltage spike or the like. In conventional systems, the transients can cause errors in the data transmissions between the two circuits **102**, **104**. The system **100** packetizes only the active data channels, so it has more bandwidth to transmit data through the barrier **112** using a fundamental frequency that is out of the band of most transients. Accordingly, the system **100** is less susceptible to transients, or has a greater common mode transient immunity (CMTI) than conventional systems.

Having described the components of the system **100**, a more detailed description of the operation of the system **100** will now be described. The first circuit **102** receives data signals on the active data channels. In the following exemplary embodiment, the first and second data channels **121** and **122** are active and the second and third data channels **123** and **124** are inactive. The serializer **118** receives the data on the active data channels and serializes the data. In some embodiments, the serializer **118** has a user input wherein the user selects the active data channels. In other embodiments, the first circuit **102** is fabricated with a fewer number of active channels than the number of channels that the serializer **118** can input. In either embodiment, only data on active data channels is serialized. Serializing means inputting data on a plurality of different parallel channels and outputting the data on a single channel. In the example of FIG. 1, the serializer **118** has four channels, but only two channels are active. The serialization is done at a clock rate, which in the example of FIG. 1 is 5 GHz.

The serializer **118** needs to increase the data rate and identify the data, such as identifying from which channel the data originated. For example, if data is received at a rate of 100 MHz on each of the active channels, the data on the output **126** of the serializer **118** has to be increased to a data rate of at least greater than 200 MHz in order to packetize both channels and include preamble data. In order to achieve these functions, the data is packetized at a higher rate, which is the above-described clock rate. In addition, preamble information is added to the data so that the deserializer **160** is able to identify the channel from which the data originated at the serializer **118**. As an example, the system **100** may be used in a motor controller wherein data on the first data channel **121** represents a first motor parameter and data on the second data channel **122** represents a second motor parameter. The preamble information identifies on which channel the data was received so that the second circuit **104** is able to process the data appropriately for the motor controller.

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The output **126** of the serializer **118** is packetized data representing data received from the active channels with the appropriate preambles. The packetized data is modulated with the signal produced by the oscillator **132** using the mixer **130**. Reference is made to FIG. 2A, which is an exemplary embodiment of the packetized data generated by the serializer **118**. As shown in FIG. 2A, the packetized data consists of pulses wherein the widths of the pulses are determined by the internal clock of the serializer **118**. FIG. 2B is an exemplary embodiment of the signal of FIG. 2A after modulation by the mixer **130**. In some embodiments, the modulated pulses are referred to as bursts. In other embodiments, a modulated packet is referred to as a burst. The pulses are modulated at a fundamental frequency that enables them to pass through the isolation barrier **112**. In some embodiments, the fundamental frequency is greater than the frequency of a transient that may affect the system **100**, so that the modulated data can be distinguished from a transient. For example, in some embodiments, the clock rate of the serializer **118** is 5 GHz and the fundamental frequency is 16 GHz.

In some embodiments, the modulated signal of FIG. 2B is amplified by the amplifier **136**, FIG. 1. In other embodiments, the signal output by the mixer **130** is strong enough so as not to need amplification. In the embodiment of FIG. 1, the fundamental frequency is high enough to pass the modulated signal through the isolation barrier **112** to the detector **150**. As described above, the ground **172** floats, so the AC signal of the fundamental frequency is able to be processed by the detector **150** irrespective of the voltage difference between the first circuit **102** and the second circuit **104**.

In some embodiments, the detector **150** is an envelope detector that detects the pulse in the burst or the pulse in the modulated signal. For example, in some embodiments, the detector **150** includes filtering (not shown) that removes the fundamental frequency so that the original pulses similar to those generated by the serializer **118** remain. In some embodiments, the detector **150** is tuned to the fundamental frequency. Accordingly, transients are not detected by the detector **150** because the fundamental frequency is much greater than expected transient frequencies. By isolating the fundamental frequency from the transient frequencies, the common mode transient isolation (CMTI) is improved.

The output of the detector **150** is pulses similar to those generated by the amplifier **136**. The pulses, however, may be lower in amplitude than the pulses generated by the amplifier **136**, but have amplitudes greater than the predetermined voltage in some embodiments of the comparator **154**. As described above, in order to further isolate the signals from noise and transients, the detected signals are compared to the predetermined voltage by the comparator **154**. The comparator **154** only passes detected signals having amplitudes greater than the predetermined voltage. In these embodiments, the comparator **154** outputs signals having a predetermined voltage level, so the signals output by the comparator **154** are substantially similar to the signals generated by the serializer **118**.

At this point, the data is in the form of packets and needs to be separated into individual channels corresponding to the active channels or data associated with the active channels. The signal generated by the comparator **154** is output to both the clock recovery **158** and the deserializer **160**. The clock recovery **158** analyzes the signal to determine the clock frequency used by the serializer **118**. Referring to FIG. 2A, the clock is shown by the tick marks on the x-axis. The reconstructed clock signal is output on the line **162** to the deserializer **160** where it is used to deserialize the data generated by the comparator **154**. The deserializer **160** outputs the data on two

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channels that correspond to the active channels **121** and **122**. In other embodiments, the data is output in serial format with header or preamble information identifying the data and/or the active data channel in which the data was received.

The operation of the system **100** is described with reference to the flow chart **300** of FIG. 3. In step **302**, serialized data is generated by serializing the data on the at least one active data channel. In step **304**, the serialized data is transmitted through the isolation barrier **112** that is coupled between the first circuit **102** and the second circuit **104**. In step **306** the serialized data is deserialized using circuitry on the second circuit **104**.

Although illustrative embodiments have been shown and described by way of example, a wide range of alternative embodiments is possible within the scope of the foregoing disclosure.

What is claimed is:

1. A data transfer system comprising:
a first circuit having:

a plurality of data channels including an active data channel configured to transmit data and an inactive data channel not configured to transmit data; and
a serializer having a plurality of inputs and an output, the inputs coupled to the plurality of data channels, the serializer configured to recognize the active data channel from the inactive data channel and couple only the active data channel from the inputs to the output;

the first circuit configured to convert the output of the serializer to serialized data modulated at a fundamental frequency;

an isolation barrier coupled to the first circuit and configured to attenuate transients while passing the serialized data at the fundamental frequency; and

a second circuit having a deserializer configured to reconstruct the data transmitted by the active data channel, the deserializer including an input and an output, the input coupled to the isolation barrier, the output configured to deliver the reconstructed data.

2. The data transfer device of claim 1 and further comprising a filter coupled between the first circuit and the second circuit, the filter having a pass band that includes the fundamental frequency.

3. The data transfer device of claim 2, wherein the frequency of a transient is outside of the pass band of the filter.

4. The data transfer device of claim 2, wherein the isolation barrier comprises the filter.

5. The data transfer device of claim 1 and further comprising a high pass filter coupled between the first circuit and the second circuit, wherein the fundamental frequency is greater than the frequency of the at least one transient, and wherein the fundamental frequency is in the pass band of the filter.

6. The data transfer device of claim 5, wherein the isolation barrier comprises the filter.

7. The data transfer device of claim 1 and further comprising a preamble generator for generating preamble information for data on the output of the serializer.

8. The data transfer device of claim 7, wherein the preamble information includes data indicative of the active channel that is being coupled to the output.

9. The data transfer device of claim 1 further comprising:
a first ground coupled to the first circuit; and
a second ground coupled to the second circuit, wherein the first ground is electrically isolated from the second ground.

10. The data transfer device of claim 1, wherein the active channels are selected by an external input.

11. The data transfer device of claim 1, wherein the first circuit is electrically isolated from the second circuit.

12. A method of transferring data between a first circuit and a second circuit, the method comprising:

recognizing, in the first circuit, an active channel configured to transmit data from an inactive data channel not configured to transmit data;

serializing only the data on active data channel in the first circuit;

transmitting the serialized data through an isolation barrier coupled between the first circuit and the second circuit; and

deserializing the serialized data received by the second circuit.

13. The method of claim 12 further comprising modulating the serialized data.

14. The method of claim 12 further comprising modulating the serialized data at a fundamental frequency, the fundamental frequency being different than the frequency associated with at least one transient.

15. The method of claim 12 further comprising attenuating at least one transient propagating between the first circuit and the second circuit.

16. The method of claim 12 further comprising:

modulating the serialized data at a fundamental frequency, the fundamental frequency being greater than the frequency associated with at least one transient; and

filtering the serialized data by a high pass filter wherein the fundamental frequency is in the pass band of the high pass filter and the frequency associated with the at least one transient is not in the pass band of the high pass filter.

17. The method of claim 12 further comprising selecting the at least one active channel.

18. The method of claim 12 further comprising selecting the at least one active channel from a plurality of data channels that are active and inactive.

19. The method of claim 12 wherein generating serialized data comprises:

receiving data on at least one active data channel using a serializer; and

outputting data from one active channel at a time to an output of the serializer.

20. The method of claim 18, wherein the serializer comprises a multiplexer.

21. A data transfer system comprising:

a first circuit having:

a plurality of data channels including an active data channel configured to transmit data and an inactive data channel not configured to transmit data;

a serializer having a plurality of inputs and an output, the inputs coupled to the plurality of data channels, the serializer configured to recognize the active data channel from the inactive data channel and couple only the active data channel from the inputs to the output;

a modulator coupled to the output of the serializer, the modulator configured to modulate the output of the serializer with a fundamental frequency; and

a first ground reference for referencing the data channels, the output of the serializer, and the output of the modulator;

an isolation barrier coupled to the first circuit and configured to attenuate transients and while passing the serialized data at the fundamental frequency; and

a second circuit having:

a deserializer configured to reconstruct the data transmitted by the active data channel, the deserializer including an input and an output, the input coupled to the isolation barrier, the output configured to deliver the reconstructed data; and

a second ground reference for referencing the second, the second ground reference being electrically isolated from the first ground reference.

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